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ABSTRACT

Virginia's 1988 General Assembly mandated special technical assistance to develop pilot rural child care programs through the collaborative efforts of the Department for Children, the Department of Social Services, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. This interim report provides an update of program activities and describes processes utilized to effect solutions to rural child care problems. Tentative conclusions of the project follow. First, a grassroots, community-generated and supported effort is the key to the success of meeting rural child care needs. Collaboration and cooperation among agencies, public and private groups, jurisdictions, and citizen groups are of paramount importance in effecting solutions to child care problems in rural areas. Public education efforts are needed to inform communities concerning local child care service gaps, service requirements, and child care professionalism. Finally, training, technical assistance, and support services are essential to maintaining a coordinated, child care system in a rural community. Included in the report are a step-by-step blueprint for state-level technical assistance, a list of project phases, a list of strengths and barriers related to meeting project goals, and descriptions of short-term and long-term strategies and their implementation. (RH)

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INTERIM REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN ON THE

Rural Child-Care Project

TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

Senate Document No. 15

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1989

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MARTHA NORRIS GILBERT
DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE (804) 786-5507

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN

805 East Broad Street
11th Floor, 8th Street Office Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

January 11, 1989

To: The General Assembly of Virginia

Please accept this document pursuant to the provisions of Senate Bill 325, Chapter 198, 1988 Acts of the Assembly, as the Department for Children's interim report of progress made toward the development of model child-care programs in rural communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Norris Gilbert

Martha Norris Gilbert
Director

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

Senate Bill 325 3

Introduction 4

Background 5

Blueprint for State-Level Technical Assistance 5

Meeting the Mandate: The Rural Child-Care Project 8

Short Term and Long Term Strategies 9

Implementation of Strategies: Update on Activities 11

Tentative Conclusions 16

Summary 17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As greater numbers of women with children enter the workforce and single-parent families grow, Virginia must face the need to strengthen and support working parents in all areas of the Commonwealth. Child care, a problem for many working parents, becomes overwhelming for some, particularly in rural localities where child-care services are scarce. Strategies to generate quality child-care services in support of the workforce in rural localities are not currently in place statewide. Sufficient resources to develop new child-care services or to adequately utilize existing resources are not available. State government must, therefore, provide technical assistance to localities to encourage the expansion of a coordinated child-care delivery system in rural communities.

Caroline County residents recently recognized the gap in child-care services in their community. Through their efforts, the 1988 General Assembly was alerted to the child-care dilemma in rural communities and mandated special technical assistance to develop pilot rural child-care programs through the collaborative efforts of the Department for Children, the Department of Social Services, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. (Senate Bill 325, Chapter 198, 1988 Acts of the Assembly)

This two year effort has two phases. During the first phase, several activities were planned and implemented in Caroline County:

- a publicity campaign, which included a county-wide project kick-off event, to inform the public about local child-care concerns and to recruit child-care providers;

- special recruitment and training of family day-care providers;

- a "Child Care Providers' Short Course" to orient new caregivers to the profession;

- technical assistance for the development of child-care financial resources for use in the county, including the Child Day Care Fee System Program, the United States Department of Agriculture Child Care Food Program, and Virginia Cooperative Extension Service funding; and

- a part-time child-care technician hired by the local Extension Service to coordinate local recruitment and referral services.

During the second phase of the project, training opportunities will be expanded through the Community College System, additional funding sources will be identified and tapped, and center-based child-care options will be explored. Employer involvement will be sought at a variety of levels.

Tentative conclusions of the project include:

- A **grass-roots, community-generated and supported effort** is key to the success of meeting rural child-care needs.

- **Collaboration and cooperation** among agencies, public and private groups, jurisdictions, and citizen groups are paramount to effecting solutions to child-care problems in rural areas.

- **Public education** efforts are needed to inform communities concerning local child-care service gaps, service requirements, and child-care professionalism.

- **Training, technical assistance, and support services** are essential to maintaining a coordinated, child-care system in a rural community.

1988 SESSION

LD2708112

SENATE BILL NO. 325
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services
on February 12, 1988)
(Patron Prior to Substitute–Senator Cross)

A BILL to further define "family day care homes" and establish rural child-care programs in certain counties.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. *§ 1. That, until January 1, 1990, in counties having a population of not less than 7,940 nor more than 8,000 and not less than 17,850 nor more than 17,910, with respect to private family homes which would be designated "family day care homes" as defined in § 63.1-195 of the Code except that they accept up to ten children, at least five of whom are school age and are not in the home for longer than three hours immediately before and three hours immediately after school hours each day, such homes will not be considered "family day care homes" for the purposes of Chapter 10 of Title 63.1 if such school-aged children also remain in such homes during normal school hours, in addition to the authorized before and after school hours, when schools are closed for holidays, inclement weather, and during the summer, provided that at least two adults or one adult and one child fourteen years of age or older are present in the home and supervising the children.*

§ 2. The Department for Children, with such assistance as it deems necessary from the Department of Social Services and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, shall, in any county having a population of not less than 17,850 nor more than 17,910, provide special technical assistance for the development of pilot child-care programs for rural communities. The Department shall provide an interim report on such model program to the General Assembly not later than January 1, 1989, and a final report not later than January 1, 1990.

Official Use By Clerks	
Passed By The Senate	**Passed By The House of Delegates**
without amendment ☐	without amendment ☐
with amendment ☐	with amendment ☐
substitute ☐	substitute ☐
substitute w/amdt ☐	substitute w/amdt ☐
Date: _____	Date: _____
_____	_____
Clerk of the Senate	Clerk of the House of Delegates

Introduction

Senate Bill 325, Chapter 198, 1988 Acts of the Assembly directed the Department for Children to provide technical assistance for the development of pilot child-care programs for rural communities. The following interim report provides an update of activities and describes processes utilized to effect solutions to rural child-care problems through the design and implementation of a pilot project led by the Department for Children in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and local entities and agencies in Caroline County.

BACKGROUND

In 1987, several Caroline County families were confronted with an unexpected child-care crisis when they discovered that their family day-care providers were caring for more children than the number allowed by law. As family day-care providers and parents became aware of Virginia's licensing standards and consequences for noncompliance, providers reduced the number of children they cared for and the affected families were forced to find other child-care. These families soon discovered that no licensed or certified facilities were operating in Caroline County.

Caroline County faced a resource problem that parents and community leaders approached on two fronts. First they contacted several area legislators to request their assistance in responding to the licensing requirements; then they communicated their concerns to the Caroline County Board of Supervisors. The Board responded by appointing a Task Force on Child Care.

The Task Force gathered information about the child-care concerns of residents, employers, and providers and submitted a proposal to the Board of Supervisors requesting they seek legislation that would amend the Code of Virginia to allow family day-care providers to care for additional school-age children on school holidays and during summer vacations without a license. By statute, five preschoolers and five school-age children in addition to children related to the provider are allowed in unlicensed family day-care homes only on school days and if school-age children are present no more than three hours before and three hours after school.

A Mandate for the Development of Rural Child-Care Services

During the 1988 General Assembly session, Senators Elmo G. Cross and Elmon T. Gray and Delegates Frank Hargrove, Robert W. Ackerman, and Harvey B. Morgan sponsored Senate Bill 325 which, in its final amended version, directed the Department for Children, with assistance from the Department of Social Services and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, to provide special technical assistance toward the development of pilot child-care programs in Caroline County. The legislation also granted exclusive permission to unlicensed providers in Caroline and Mathews Counties to care for up to 10 children (five preschoolers, five school-agers), in addition to children related to the providers, during school holidays and summer vacations until January 1, 1990.

BLUEPRINT FOR STATE-LEVEL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Virginia Department for Children began project activities by developing a six-step plan. This plan was driven by the acknowledgement that interagency collaboration, cooperation, and strong communication linkages were critical to the success of the project. The plan that follows became the framework for the delivery of technical assistance.

Step 1: Project Planning Document

A planning document prepared by Department for Children staff was submitted to, and approved by, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. Components of the plan included:

- state-level goals for the provision of technical assistance to the project;
- possible vehicles for the provision of technical assistance services;
- identification of barriers to collaborative technical assistance efforts;
- techniques to prevent barriers; and
- a detailed, comprehensive work plan (with accompanying timeline and delineation of staff assignments) to accomplish goals for state involvement

Step 2: Research Activities

Selected staff began research efforts regarding rural child-care needs and concerns. Research activities included:

-- Interviews of various Caroline County leaders to gather a range of perspectives on the problems;

-- A literature review to identify characteristics unique to rural communities, and possible technical assistance models;

-- A review of all potential funding sources, federal, state, and private;

-- Identification of officials in the Commonwealth and other states who have experience with community technical assistance projects;

-- A child-care needs and services survey of Virginia Cooperative Extension Service agents (forty of 57 respondents were from rural localities); and

-- Caroline County-specific data and information collection.

Step 3: Delivery Model for Technical Assistance

The Department for Children utilized a collaborative committee approach for the delivery of technical assistance. A "Rural Child Care Project Committee", comprised of state, regional, and local members, was established to formulate and implement project activities and to be the liaison between community groups and state agencies.

Members of the committee included a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, two representatives of the Caroline County Task Force on Child Care (the County Director of Planning and Community Development and the Extension Home Economist of the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service), and representatives of the local school division, the Department of Social Services (state, regional, and local offices), and the (state) Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.

Step 4: Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for all project committee members were defined and clarified to establish an infrastructure for the delivery of technical assistance services. With the sanction of the county Task Force on Child Care, the Director of Planning and Community Development and the Extension Home Economist of the local Cooperative Extension Service were named on-site coordinators.

To assign prominence to the project in the agency and in state government, the Director of the Department for Children chaired the committee, and a Human Resources Developer/Child-Care Specialist served as the project coordinator.

Step 5: Formal Communication Mechanisms

To enhance the flow of communication between the state and Caroline County and to promote continuity of the project, a formal line of communication was effected through bi-weekly meetings of the full Project Committee, both in Richmond and at locations in Caroline County. Weekly meetings were scheduled as needed to meet special project objectives. All official decisions affecting the Project were made at these meetings.

Other planned communication included individual meetings with key black leaders in the county to promote a racially integrated approach, memoranda/correspondence to document activities, and periodic checklists of activities and responsibilities relating to specific tasks.

Step 6: Evaluation

Informal evaluation procedures were defined to ensure continuous feedback on issues. Formal evaluation of the project is being handled by Virginia Cooperative Extension Service faculty, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI & SU).

Project Phases

Phases of the project were outlined by Department for Children staff and later agreed upon by committee members:

Phase I: Project Orientation

The committee members would become familiar with local child-care issues and concerns.

Phase II: Identification of Resources

Local- and state-level resources available for the project would be enumerated.

Phase III: Identification of Strategies

Local strategies to facilitate the provision of child-care services would be specified and agreed upon by September, 1988.

Phase IV: Implementation of Strategies

Details would be planned and implemented at the local level with assistance from the Department for Children, the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.

Phase V: Evaluation

Evaluation would occur at regular intervals to monitor the technical assistance process and progress of the project during each phase.

The timeline would call for an overlapping of phases.

MEETING THE MANDATE: THE RURAL CHILD-CARE PROJECT

The first meeting of the Rural Child-Care Project Committee occurred in May, 1988. The Committee began its work by establishing a project goal, identifying community strengths and barriers to child care, and profiling characteristics of the community which impact child care.

Project Goal

To promote the development of quality child-care services in Caroline County through model pilot programs which can be replicated in other areas of the Commonwealth.

Strengths and Barriers

Strengths

* A local task force on child care is committed to the project

* A vehicle for the delivery of information and referral services is available through the Task Force

* Flexible zoning requirements which are being revised to encourage economic development

* Available resources, such as:

  - Head Start
  - a part time nursery school
  - 60 clubs and organizations
  - cooperative school system
  - increasingly active PTA
  - an Industrial Development Authority which has identified lack of child care as a problem.

Barriers

* A public uninformed about the complexities of child-care issues and the impact of these issues on the community, -- and the need to generate public involvement in solutions

* Lack of appropriate building space which would meet building codes for child-care centers

* Lack of financial resources to initiate new programs, subsidize low-income working parents, train providers, and retrofit buildings for day-care centers

* Lack of qualified and trained providers to meet licensing requirements

* Geographical barriers (distances) and lack of public transportation to central areas where day-care sites might be established

* High costs of all types of day-care liability insurance, and limited availability of liability insurance for family day-care providers

Profile of Caroline County

- 535 square miles

- 55.9% white, 42.9% black, 1.2% other (1980 Census)
  Estimated for 1988 - 60.4% white, 37.9% black, 1.7% others (Woods and Pool Economics, Inc., 1987)

- 81.1% of county population born in Virginia (1980 Census)

- 4616 families, with 3.09 persons per household and 671 female heads of households (1980 Census)

- 562 persons live on 262 farms (1980 Census)

- Projected population growth at a 15% growth rate:

  1990 - 20,600
  1995 - 21,700
  2000 - 22,700

- The 1986 median income per family is $24,978, approximately $6,000 less than the 1986 state median family income (Virginia Employment Commission)

- 1986 Civilian Labor Force (Virginia Employment Commission):

	Total	White	Black	Native American	Hispanic
Women	3,916	2,026	1,804	24	39
Men	5,188	3,089	2,004	50	45
Grand Total	9,104	5,115	3,808	74	84

- 35% of 1980 households had incomes below the poverty level
- Approximately 61% of workers commute outside the county to work
- The largest employers include the school system, an aluminum producer, and the electrical cooperative (1988 Caroline County Office of Planning and Community Development)
- Public and private school enrollment (1980 Census)

Type	Total	White	Black	American Indian
Nursery	77	43	34	
K-8	3,080	1,540	1,513	27
8-12	1,371	617	739	15
College	293	167	127	
Private Schools	186			

SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM STRATEGIES

Short term and long term strategies were defined by the Committee as resources were identified and developed.

Short Term Strategies

Strategies formulated for the first year (1988-89):

I. Develop and initiate a public education campaign to inform residents of the county about child day-care services and to recruit caregivers.

II. Design and implement support services for a network of family day-care providers to serve children from infancy through school age.

III. Identify and develop the appropriate components and resources for a training program for child care providers/caregivers.

IV. Identify funding sources and initiate fund raising activities to promote child day care.

Long Term Strategies

Strategies to be examined in the second year (1989-90):

I. Encourage the establishment of employer-sponsored child care options among businesses and provide technical assistance.

II. Assess the need to establish a child-care center and/or school-based child-care program.

III. Utilize state and local resources to propose solutions to address transportation problems of working families and day-care providers.

IV. Establish plans for replication of the Rural Child-Care Project in other rural localities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

Short Term Strategy I - Public Education Campaign

Premise: Public education should consist of two main thrusts:

1. Informing the public about child care problems, issues, needs, and possible remedies that would require their actions; and

2. Recruiting family day-care providers.

A publicity campaign was developed to maximize use of print and electronic media:

- An easily recognizable logo was designed to enhance visibility of the project and to be used in all correspondence and media materials.

- A 10' x 3', **Caroline Cares for Children,** cloth banner was designed for use at all project related events.

- A project launching event was planned to focus public awareness on child-care issues.

- A comprehensive "child-care" supplement was published in the local newspaper. The supplement included information regarding local child care, the project launching event, recruitment of providers, licensing standards, and training of caregivers.

- A radio talk show on child care and follow-up announcements of the launching event were presented on John Allen's "Party Line" (WFLS radio). The show featured an interview of state and local officials.

- Posters and flyers were distributed to advertise the launching event and recruit family child care providers.

- Press releases and calendar announcements regarding the launching event were issued to several area newspapers and television stations.

- A telephone line for callers interested in child care was established, and the telephone number was publicized.

The launching activity for the Rural Child-Care Project was a **Caroline County Cares for Children Celebration** - a special, county-wide event held in collaboration with the Upper Caroline Fire Department in September, 1988.

Community groups collaborated to plan and stage the celebration. Several local businesses made financial contributions to help defray costs or donated needed items or services (door prizes, helium, ribbons, printing). A local military installation supplied tents, tables, and tablecloths. The sheriff's department directed traffic at the Celebration site and arranged for "Mr. McGruff, the Crime Dog" to be available to greet the children. The local school system contributed craft supplies. The county department of parks and recreation planned and conducted recreational activities for children. County 4-H volunteers provided a "4-H Care Bear." Task Force members greeted guests and sold T-shirts imprinted with the project logo.

The Rural Child-Care Project Committee organized and staffed, with the assistance of the Task Force, ten booths featuring:

Family Day Care As A Business — Information for parents and potential child-care providers on such topics as licensing standards, the USDA Child Care Food Program, training programs for providers, and quality child-care components

Community Services for Children	Information on nutrition, fire safety, health, and library services
Activities for Children	Hands-on make and take activities for children and adults
	A display and handouts on creating toys from scraps

Guests included legislators, state and federal officials, community dignitaries, adults of all ages, and children. The objectives for the event were accomplished. Eleven persons requested additional information on becoming family day-care providers. Public awareness of the project was heightened as evidenced by 31 telephone calls received on the special child care line.

Short Term Strategy II - Establishing a Network of Family Day-Care Homes

Premise: Given the existing transportation, building, and financial barriers to establishing child-care centers, family day care should be a priority focus.

Models for the delivery of family day-care services were reviewed and visited. A few localities utilize a sponsoring organization (such as a family day-care system) to link family day-care providers, who are recruited and trained by the organization, with families in need of child care. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) makes use of sponoring organizations to administer its Child Care Food Program locally. The pros and cons of establishing a locally-based organization or utilizing an existing agency based elsewhere were weighed by Caroline County. Because of limited resources in the county, the Committee agreed that the USDA Child Care Food Program model could provide dual benefits for children and families -- good nutrition and trained providers.

The Project Committee and the Caroline County Task Force on Child Care chose The Planning Council of Norfolk to serve as the USDA sponsor for day-care homes. Criteria for sponsor selection were professional reputation, program quality, experience with recruitment and training (child-care providers) in several regions of the Commonwealth, and knowledge and expertise in management of child-care services. Eleven persons have requested additional information about joining the USDA Child Care Food Program.

Short Term Strategy III - Training Program for Day-Care Providers

Premise: Training opportunities for providers should be easily accessible, relevant, and timely.

The Department for Children emphasized the need to have training services in place **prior to** the initiation of recruitment efforts. Early in the life of the project, a Training Resource File (prepared by the Department for Children staff) was presented to Committee members, and educational materials were exhibited to acquaint the Committee with available resources (curricula, books, video/audio cassettes, magazines and journals, and organization listings).

The local school division, the Community College System, and the Cooperative Extension Service were considered appropriate, available vehicles for training. The local school division, through the Supervisor of Vocational Education, volunteered to spearhead the first major training effort. The Community College System also agreed to participate in the project.

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, through contacts initiated by the state Home Economics Program Director, provided a part-time faculty position based at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI & SU) to coordinate training and develop and implement an evaluation design for the project. Additionally, a part-time technician at the local Extension Service office was employed by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service to assist in recruiting providers to participate in training.

Specific training activities of the project included:

1. A ten session "Short Course for Child-Care Providers" offered under the auspices of the Caroline County Adult Education Program, October 4-December 13, 1988. Project committee members utilized the Training Resource File to design the course outline. The Department for Children enlisted the assistance of several state resources, including VPI & SU and Virginia State University faculty, the Department of Fire Programs, and others, to join a local physician and members of the Project Committee in presenting a model course.

2. A semester course for child-care providers presented and sponsored by Rappahannock Community College (January-April, 1989).

3. Short term workshops to meet the needs of prospective and current providers sponsored by various agencies (scheduled for Spring, 1989).

Short Term Strategy IV - Identifying Funding Sources

Premise: A range of funding sources should be tapped.

- Child Day Care Fee System Program

In July, 1988, the Virginia Department of Social Services allocated $22,254 to Caroline County for the implementation of the Child Day Care Fee System Program, which provides child-care subsidies to low-income working parents. A 10 percent local match (total funds with match: $24,479) was agreed upon by the Board of Supervisors after a presentation by the Department of Social Services and the Director of Planning and Community Development. The regional Department of Social Services is providing technical assistance to the local agency to implement this program.

- USDA Child Care Food Program

The USDA Child Care Food Program offers cash reimbursements and donated commodities to child-care homes and facilities which serve approved meals to children in their care. Individual family day-care homes participate through a "sponsoring organization." The USDA Child Care Food Program also offers training and supportive services to providers who are approved for this program. The Board of Supervisors designated The Planning Council to be the USDA sponsoring agency for the county.

- Extension Service Funding

The local Extension Service has received funding from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service for one half-time technician, to coordinate and assist with recruitment. Additionally, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service has funded one half-time VPI & SU faculty position to coordinate local training and evaluation.

- Private Funding

Several banks and other businesses donated funds to cover expenses of the "Caroline County Cares for Children Celebration".

- Additional Funding Sources

Other funding sources which are currently being investigated include:

- a proposal for a training grant through the United States Department of Education. If accepted, an individualized training model for rural areas will be implemented;
- a Virginia Dependent Care Planning and Development Grant which provides federal funds for development and expansion of school-age child-care programs;
- community facility loans through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development or the U.S. Farmers Home Administration; and
- a training grant through the Employment Services Programs (ESP) or the Joint Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Program.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

The Rural Child-Care Project Committee and the Department for Children have drawn the following tentative conclusions:

1. A grass-roots effort is essential for effecting solutions to child care problems.

2. Local government's response to grass-roots efforts can reduce gaps in child care services. Specifically, influential policymakers are vital in facilitating child-care service planning.

3. A Task Force on Child Care appointed by the county Board of Supervisors is necessary to harness local talents, skills, and resources.

4. The involvement of a variety of leaders who have authority and/or decision making powers reduces and eliminates barriers to accomplishing tasks.

5. Businesses are an important source of support for implementing activities.

6. Collaboration and cooperation among agencies, public and private groups, jurisdictions, and citizen groups are essential to the success of a project.

7. The state's involvement in the Rural Child-Care Project assisted the county in accessing a broad range of information and resources.

8. Planning for the provision of all types of child-care programs (family-based and center-based) should occur in a comprehensive manner.

9. A public education effort is needed to inform communities about the need for child-care services in rural localities.

10. The public education campaign must include an effort to enable the public to fully embrace the concept of child care as a profession requiring specialized skills and training.

11. Myths about licensing requirements and the licensing process must be dispelled through an aggressive public information effort.

12. A launching event - such as a county-wide celebration - is an effective public relations tool to focus attention on the issue.

13. Training and support services need to be in place prior to recruitment of providers to promote the development of qualified and skilled caregivers.

SUMMARY

The Rural Child-Care Project is a model of community collaboration and cooperation. At the state level, the Department for Children has provided technical assistance and leadership in the planning and implementation of project goals. The Department of Social Services has provided technical assistance regarding licensure of family day-care homes and local establishment of the Child Day Care Fee System Program. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service has provided staff and funding to assist in coordination of training and project evaluation.

At the local level, the Caroline County Office of Planning and Community Development and the Caroline County Cooperative Extension Service provided enthusiastic leadership for the project. The Caroline County Department of Social Services, the Caroline County Public Schools, businesses, churches, and various volunteer and community groups have become a part of a solution. These groups ensure smooth progress toward overcoming the barriers to the delivery of child-care services.

The Rural Child-Care Project promises the development of strategies and mechanisms for the promotion of child-care services in rural areas should sufficient resources at a variety of levels be allocated for the replication of this pilot program. Partnership, cooperation, collaboration, and community commitment are key to the success of this project.